

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims in the instant application.

1-2. (cancelled)

3. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~6 or~~ 7, wherein the recombinant nucleic acid molecule encoding two selectable markers further comprises one or more gene constructs of interest expressible in plastids and encoding one or more gene products of interest, and wherein the one or more gene constructs of interest are adjacent to the second selectable marker (lethal marker) on the vector.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the second selectable marker (lethal marker) and the gene construct or one or more gene constructs of interest each have different promoters functional in plastids and are expressed independently.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the second selectable marker (lethal marker) and the gene construct or the one or more gene constructs of interest ~~or gene constructs~~ are organized as a operon-like polycistronic gene.

6. (cancelled)

7. (currently amended) A method for obtaining a transplastomic plant comprising the steps of:

a) introducing into a plant cell plastid a recombinant nucleic acid molecule encoding two selectable markers comprising two distinct selectable marker constructs, wherein a first selectable marker (a non-lethal marker) confers resistance to a non-lethal selective compound and a second selectable marker (a lethal marker) confers tolerance to a lethal compound and wherein each of the selectable marker constructs comprises a promoter functional in a plant cell plastid and a transcriptional termination region functional in a plant cell plastid, wherein introducing the recombinant nucleic acid molecule encoding two selectable markers is accomplished by a plastid

transformation vector, said vector comprising the nucleic acid molecule encoding the second selectable marker (lethal marker) ~~[[is]]~~ flanked by nucleic acid sequences which are homologous to non-essential plastid targeting nucleic acid sequences, and the recombinant nucleic acid molecule encoding the first selectable marker (non-lethal marker) ~~[[is]]~~ flanked by nucleic acid sequences which are homologous to essential plastid targeting nucleic acid sequences;

b) placing a plant cell comprising the recombinant nucleic acid molecule on a first culture medium comprising a plastid non-lethal compound to which the first selectable marker confers resistance for either 1) a period of about 2 weeks or 2) or until shoots appear on a callus formed from the plant cell; and

c) placing the plant cell on a second culture medium comprising a plastid lethal compound to which the second selectable marker confers resistance for a period of time sufficient to permit the plant cell to be homoplasmic for the lethal marker; and

d) obtaining a transplastomic plant by regenerating the transplastomic plant from the plant cell, wherein the transplastomic plant comprises only the second selectable marker (lethal marker).

8. (cancelled)

9. (previously amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the nucleic acid molecule encoding the first selectable marker (non-lethal marker) sequence is unstably or transiently integrated into the plastome.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~6 or~~ 7, wherein the first selectable marker (non-lethal marker) is an antibiotic resistance gene.

11. (original) The method of claim 10, wherein the antibiotic resistance gene is *aadA* and the non-lethal selective compound is spectinomycin or streptomycin.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~[[1]]~~ 7, wherein the second selectable marker (lethal marker) is a herbicide tolerance gene.

13. (previously amended) The method of claim 12, wherein the herbicide tolerance gene is a mutated form of a protoporphorynogen oxidase (*ppo*) and the lethal selective compound is butafenacil or Formula XVII.

14. (cancelled)

15. (previously amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the plastid transformation vector comprises SEQ ID NO:3.

16. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~6~~ 7, wherein the plant is tobacco, tomato, petunia, potato, brassica spp. , safflower, or lemna.

17-36. (cancelled)